

Ardusa

A GRAMMAR OF THE ARDUSAN LANGUAGES

by Ian A. Cook

last edited

September 23, 2018

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Ardusa is a fictional landmass set in a fictional constructed world. All of the languages spoken on Ardusa, such as Tavonic, Alnuric, Redodhic, and others, are themselves fictional, spoken by fictional groups of people, and as such are not related to any naturally existing languages. These languages' vocabularies are entirely *a priori*, which means that no words are derived from the vocabularies of real-world languages. That being said, these languages are intended to be naturalistic, so similarities will occur. Nonetheless, any actual duplication is accidental.



No website yet



<https://github.com/nai888/ardusa>



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Abbreviations

AN animate
IND indicative
INF infinitive
PL plural

PRF perfective
PRG progressive
PST past
TOP topic

* ungrammatical
? grammatically questionable
! semantically odd or ill-formed

Acknowledgments

Given that I have not taken any official linguistics coursework, this work would not be possible without several sources of linguistic education. Mark Rosenfelder's *The Language Construction Kit* and *Advanced Language Construction Kit* were important to my first starting out in the world of language construction, with further knowledge gained from David J. Peterson's *The Art of Language Invention*. Of course, I received an unmeasurable amount of education via several online sources, especially the articles available on Wikipedia. Yet more education, as well as inspiration and motivation, have come from the *Conlangery* podcast and all its hosts and guests. Lexicon generation received guidance from Mark Rosenfelder's *The Conlanger's Lexipedia* and William S. Annis' *A Conlanger's Thesaurus*.

Finally, this document's format, layout, and organization have been influenced by several sources, particularly Thomas E. Payne's *Describing Morphosyntax*, Carsten Becker's *A Grammar of Ayeri*, and Matt Pearson's *The Okuna Reference Grammar*.

Preface

This document provides a detailed grammatical description of the languages of Ardusa, a fictional landmass set in a fictional constructed world. This project serves as a method for linguistic research, as an intellectual exercise, as an outlet for creative and artistic expression, and as a setting for potential future works of fiction. It is intended primarily for my own personal use and entertainment, though others with similar linguistic interests will hopefully find it interesting and entertaining as well. I have chosen to use \LaTeX to typeset this grammar because it provides a way to be clear, consistent, and organized. Further, since \LaTeX uses plain text files, it allows me to use Git for version control so I can keep track of changes over time.

My goal is to build a series of languages with naturalistic grammars that are linguistically plausible and consistent, yet also original in their content and details. This project consists of three distinct and unrelated language families, each of which contains one or more related languages. Some elements of these languages are influenced by existing languages such as Japanese, Finnish, Navajo, Nahuatl, and Arabic, but they are not meant to simply mimic these, instead drawing this inspiration into new forms along with entirely *a priori* lexicons. Ardusa and the Ardusan languages is an ongoing project with no fixed endpoint or goal.

This concise grammar is my attempt to document the Ardusan languages in an official and systematic way, and as comprehensively as possible. It is intended to be the official description of the languages. This is a concise grammar because, admittedly, I am not a professional linguist, nor have I taken any linguistics coursework. My education in linguistics consists solely of self-guided research, which means invariably my knowledge will be limited. It is a concise grammar because, frankly, I don't know enough to go into greater detail. That being said, I'm always eager to learn, and will always accept feedback. Again, learning is one of the reasons for this endeavor.

Since the purpose of writing this grammar is to provide a comprehensive description of the Ardusan languages, not to teach them to others, it is not intended to serve as a textbook or as a way to learn the languages. I have organized topics thematically, rather than curricularly, and I employ technical terms when they are precise, accurate, and appropriate. I have not conducted a formal analysis of the languages, but I have worked to make it as descriptive as possible.

The discussion is ordered from the smallest elements of the languages to the largest. It begins with a description of each language's place in Ardusa followed by their phonologies, it addresses morphology and the combining of words, it discusses vocabulary and derivation, and it explains syntax and discourse. The final chapter serves as a reference grammar, summarizing all of the previous chapters. There are

also several appendices describing the conceptual metaphors that organize much of the lexicons, the naming practices of the fictional speakers of these languages, several translation examples, and lexicons. Other resources include a glossary of linguistic glossing abbreviations, a bibliography, and an index.

This document uses several linguistics conventions to clarify meaning. Any reference to specific orthographic spelling is marked with angled brackets, such as ⟨hin⟩. Pronunciations are usually given phonemically, in which case they are marked with slashes, such as /hin/. Phonetic pronunciations are used only when conveying specific details like the difference between allophones, and are marked with square brackets, such as [çin]. Both phonemic and phonetic pronunciations are given using the International Phonetic Alphabet. Foreign words are always written in italics, such as *lu*. English glosses are surrounded by single quotes, such as ‘and’. If a morphological gloss is provided in-line, it is surrounded by parentheses, such as (INF).

Many short examples are provided in one single line.

- (1) Tavonic: *šek* /ʃek/ ‘ran’ (run.IND.PST.PRF)

Longer examples are usually provided with a multi-line, or interlinear, gloss. In these examples, the optional first line will indicate which language the example is in, if it is not clear from context. The next line presents the text in that language, followed by the pronunciation. After this, the text is broken into its component morphemes, and the following line provides a morpheme-by-morpheme gloss. The final line provides an English translation of the example phrase or sentence.

- (2) Tavonic

Oko nan šeđo.

/o'ko nan ʃe'ðo/

oko nan šeđo

dog PL.AN.TOP run.IND.PST.PRG

‘The dogs were running.’

As shown in example 2, morpheme glosses are labeled with abbreviations in SMALL CAPS. A full list of all glossing abbreviations is given on page vii. A hyphen marks a morpheme boundary within a word that is shared between the text and its gloss, while a period marks a boundary present in only one or the other, including when a single word in the text corresponds to multiple words in its gloss. Clitics are marked with an equals sign, reduplication with a tilde, discontinuous affixes (e.g., infixes, circumfixes) with angle brackets, and morphemes that cannot be easily separated out with backslashes.

The L^AT_EX source code for this grammar and a copy of this PDF are available in a public [GitHub](#) repository. Undoubtedly, there will be errors in this document. If you notice any, please feel free to open an issue in the GitHub repository with a description and the location of the error.

Ian A. Cook
Minneapolis, September 8, 2018

Part I

Tavonic Language Family

History and Ethnography

This chapter will present a brief history of the Tavonic language family, followed by a short description of its ethnolinguistic context.

1.1 Brief History

The Tavotath (the Tavonic people) migrated to Ardusa hundreds of years ago in what they termed Year 1 of the Ardusan Era (AE). Ardusa is far from any other landmasses and is isolated from the influence of other lands and other peoples. The Tavotath landed in the warm southeastern regions of Ardusa where they first established their new home, naming this new realm *Urdeso*, a compound word meaning ‘Safe Land’. Over the following centuries, the Tavotath spread westward and northward throughout the whole of Ardusa.

As the Tavotath spread, they formed several individual territories, each of which eventually developed into small kingdoms. These kingdoms constantly battled one another for power, and borders were continually shifting. Those who fled the fighting fled northward, furthering the Tavonic expansion throughout Ardusa. As the Tavotath spread farther apart and splintered, their language diverged. Two main dialects emerged, one in the north and one in the south.

After a few hundred years, one kingdom in the south emerged as dominant, conquering or allying with more and more kingdoms until, by 327 AE, the entire south of Ardusa was united under one empire. This empire enforced the usage of the language that had emerged in the south, thus forming the Alnuric language. The empire continued to push northward until it spread too thin and reached a stalemate with the allied kingdoms in the north around 371 AE. Finally, in 582 AE after a couple hundred years of relatively stable rule, the empire declined and divided again into individual territories, leaving behind six sovereign kingdoms.

While the empire was emerging in the south, the kingdoms in the north formed a loose alliance to resist its spread. The alliance managed to reach a stalemate with the empire, stopping its spread northward. The allied kingdoms together maintained the language that emerged in the north, thus forming the Redodhic language. Eventually, as the empire split in 582 AE and the northern alliance was no longer needed, the north also split into individual territories, leaving behind four sovereign kingdoms.

1.2 Ethnography

1.2.1 Demonyms and Language Names

Tavonic

The Tavotath were a tribe that migrated to Ardusa together, fleeing their previous home. The Tavonic word *tavo* /ta'vo/ means 'person', and so the derived word *Tavotaþ* /ta.vo'taθ/ means 'people' or 'tribe'. In other words, the Tavotath referred to themselves as the People, with *Tavonak* being the Language of the People. The Alnuric- and Redodhic-derived words, *Tevodeþ* /te.vo'deθ/ and *Tovujip* /to.vu'dʒiθ/ respectively, refer to all people who descended from the original Tavotath tribe. Both Alnuric and Redodhic are Tavotath languages and part of the Tavonic language family.

Alnuric

For hundreds of years, the empire ruled in the southern region of Ardusa. The Tavonic word *unner* /un'ner/ 'empire' evolved into the Alnuric word *alnur* /al'nur/. *Alnurek* /al.nu'rek/ 'Alnuric' takes its name from this word. Meanwhile, the Redodhic name for the empire is *nonar* /no'nar/, and its name for the Alnuric language is *Nonrik* /non'rik/. Similarly, the Alnuric and Redodhic names for the Alnuric people are *Alnureþ* /al.nu'reθ/ and *Nonriþ* /non'riθ/ respectively.

Redodhic

In the north, the alliance resisted the empire's expansion. The Tavonic word *aroltutaþ* /a.rol.tu'taθ/ signifies 'alliance', however the alliance instead used the simpler form *arutaþ* /a.ru'taθ/ 'standers' to signify the alliance of those kingdoms standing against the empire. *Arutaþ* evolved into the Redodhic word *rejip* /re'dʒiθ/, and *Redoðik* /re.do'ðik/ 'Redodhic' takes its name from this word. The Alnuric name for the alliance is *eradeþ* /e.ra'deθ/, and its name for the Redodhic language is *Eratþek* /e.rat'θek/. Similarly, the Redodhic and Alnuric names for the Redodhic people are *Redoðip* /re.do'ðiθ/ and *Eratþep* /e.rat'θeθ/ respectively.

1.2.2 Ethnology

Here will be a brief ethnological description of the Tavotath.

1.2.3 Demography

Here will be a brief demographical description of the Tavotath.

Phonology

This chapter will present the inventory of consonants and vowels. An observational analysis of the Tavonic languages' syllable structures and phonotactics will follow. The chapter will close with notes on syllable stress within words and a brief exploration of intonation.

2.1 Tavonic Phoneme Inventory

2.1.1 Consonants

With approximately 20 consonants, Tavonic has an “average” inventory.¹ Table 2.1 shows the full chart of consonant phonemes, along with several allophones enclosed in parentheses. Table 2.2 shows how each consonant in Tavonic is romanized.

Despite its “average” inventory of consonants, there are many more allophones that occur in the language. First, any doubled consonant is realized as a geminated (elongated) consonant.

- (1) *unner* /un:er/ ‘empire’

Thus, example 1 above is realized with a lengthened [n]. A doubled ⟨r⟩ is similarly geminated, but the pronunciation changes from a flap/tap to a trill.

The remaining allophones occur due to various sound change processes, mostly by assimilation. For example, /n/ becomes velarized when it appears immediately before a velar consonant.

- (2) *tavonga* [ta.voŋ'ga] ‘humanlike’

As discussed above, ⟨r⟩ can be pronounced as both a tap/flap [ɾ] and as a trill [r]. Additionally, when part of certain consonant clusters, it can be pronounced as an approximant [ɹ]. This primarily occurs when the ⟨r⟩ leads into a cluster or immediately follows a nasal.

- (3) *frorgali* [froɹ.'ga.li] ‘to un-see’

¹Ian Maddieson, “Consonant Inventories,” in *The World Atlas of Language Structures Online*, ed. Matthew S. Dryer and Martin Haspelmath (Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, 2013), <http://wals.info/chapter/1>.

Table 2.1: Tavonic Phonetic Consonant Inventory (allophones in parentheses)

Consonants	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Velar
Nasal	m			n		(ŋ)
Plosive		p b	t d			k g
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	x ɣ
Flap/Tap				r		
Trill				(r)		
Approximant				(ɹ)		
Lateral				l		

Table 2.2: Tavonic Consonant Romanization

Phone	Phoneme	Romanization	English	Notes
[m]	/m/	⟨m⟩	⟨m⟩	
[n]	/n/	⟨n⟩	⟨n⟩	
[ŋ]	/n/	⟨n⟩	⟨n⟩	/n/ becomes velarized before a velar consonant
[p]	/p/	⟨p⟩	⟨p⟩	
[b]	/b/	⟨b⟩	⟨b⟩	
[t]	/t/	⟨t⟩	⟨t⟩	
[d]	/d/	⟨d⟩	⟨d⟩	
[k]	/k/	⟨k⟩	⟨k⟩	
[g]	/g/	⟨g⟩	⟨g⟩	
[f]	/f/	⟨f⟩	⟨f⟩	
[v]	/v/	⟨v⟩	⟨v⟩	
[θ]	/θ/	⟨þ⟩	⟨th⟩	
[ð]	/ð/	⟨ð⟩	⟨dh⟩	
[s]	/s/	⟨s⟩	⟨s⟩	
[z]	/z/	⟨z⟩	⟨z⟩	
[ʃ]	/ʃ/	⟨š⟩	⟨sh⟩	
[ʒ]	/ʒ/	⟨ž⟩	⟨zh⟩	
[x]	/x/	⟨ķ⟩	⟨kh⟩	
[ɣ]	/ɣ/	⟨ğ⟩	⟨gh⟩	
[r]	/r/	⟨r⟩	⟨r⟩	
[r]	/r/	⟨rr⟩	⟨rr⟩	⟨r⟩ is trilled when doubled
[ɹ]	/r/	⟨r⟩	⟨r⟩	⟨r⟩ is occasionally pronounced as an approximant when a part of a consonant cluster
[l]	/l/	⟨l⟩	⟨l⟩	

Table 2.3: Tavonic Vowel Inventory



2.1.2 Vowels

Tavonic distinguishes five vowel qualities, as shown in Table 2.3, giving it an “average” inventory.² This means the consonant–vowel ratio is 20:5 or 4.0, which is “average”.³ Tavonic does not distinguish long and short vowels and does not allow any diphthongs.

Note that all Tavonic vowels have a very rigid acceptable pronunciation with very little variance.

- (4) a. *akrinsali* ‘to rewrite’ is pronounced /ak.rin'sa.li/. ⟨i⟩ is not pronounced with a lax [ɪ] in closed syllables (i.e., /ak.rɪn'sa.li/)
- b. *tlopevem* ‘permission’ is pronounced /tlo.θe'vem/. ⟨e⟩ is not pronounced with a central [ɘ] in unaccented syllables or an open [ɛ] in closed syllables (i.e., /tlo.θə'vem/), nor is it diphthongized to [eɪ] (i.e., /tlo.θe'veɪm/)
- c. *kalo* ‘man’ is pronounced /xa'lo/. ⟨a⟩ is not pronounced with a raised [æ] (i.e., /xæ'lo/), a backed [ɑ] (i.e., /xɑ'lo/), or a centralized [ɜ] (i.e., /xɜ'lo/)
- d. *esondi* ‘arable’ is pronounced /e.son'di/. ⟨o⟩ is not pronounced with an open [ɔ] (i.e., [e.sɔn'di]), nor is it diphthongized to [ou] (i.e., /e.sou'n'di/)
- e. *frumbali* ‘to misunderstand’ is pronounced /frum'ba.li/. ⟨u⟩ is not pronounced with an open [ʌ] (i.e., /frʌm'ba.li/) or a centralized [ʊ] (i.e., /frum'ba.li/)

2.2 Tavonic Phonotactics

At the time of writing, there does not yet exist a sufficient corpus for a meaningful statistical analysis of Tavonic’s phonotactics. Therefore, this section will present only a cursory observational analysis.

2.2.1 Syllable Structures

Syllables in Tavonic must contain a vowel to serve as the syllable’s nucleus. Each syllable will only have at most one vowel. Syllables may also include any single consonant or one of a limited set of

²Ian Maddieson, “Vowel Quality Inventories,” in *The World Atlas of Language Structures Online*, ed. Matthew S. Dryer and Martin Haspelmath (Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, 2013), <http://wals.info/chapter/2>.

³Ian Maddieson, “Consonant–Vowel Ratio,” in *The World Atlas of Language Structures Online*, ed. Matthew S. Dryer and Martin Haspelmath (Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, 2013), <http://wals.info/chapter/3>.

two-consonant clusters as the onset, coda, or both.

In other words, the most complex syllable structure allowed in Tavonic is CCVCC, with restrictions on the allowable consonant clusters, giving Tavonic a “moderately complex syllable structure”.⁴

V

The most basic syllable structure is simply a vowel (V). V syllables occur exclusively at the beginning of a word.

- (5) a. *e* /e/ ‘in’ or ‘on’
b. *eđer* /e’đer/ ‘pen’
c. *abom* /a’bom/ ‘two’
d. *oko* /o’ko/ ‘dog’
e. *usukon* /u.su’kon/ ‘possessor’

CV

A syllable can contain a single-consonant onset. There is no restriction on which consonants may appear in the onset. This is likely the most frequent type of syllable in Tavonic.

- (6) a. *ga* /ga/ ‘but’
b. *lu* /lu/ ‘and’
c. *mo* /mo/ ‘with’
d. *ķalo* /xa’lo/ ‘man’
e. *šeđo* /’je.đo/ (run.PST.IND.PRG) ‘was running’

VC

A syllable can contain a single-consonant coda. There is no restriction on which consonants may appear in the coda. VC syllables also occur exclusively at the beginning of a word.

- (7) a. *elbi* /el’bi/ ‘egg’
b. *ablu* /ab’lu/ ‘cat’
c. *ongo* /on’go/ ‘pan’
d. *urda* /ur’da/ ‘safe’

⁴Ian Maddieson, “Syllable Structure,” in *The World Atlas of Language Structures Online*, ed. Matthew S. Dryer and Martin Haspelmath (Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, 2013), <http://wals.info/chapter/12>.

CVC

The above two syllable types can be combined by having a consonant at both the onset and coda of a syllable. This syllable type can occur anywhere, but is most common at the end of a word. This is likely the second-most frequent type of syllable in Tavonic.

- (8) a. *kalven* /xal'ven/ '400'
b. *ablunga* /ab.lun'ga/ 'catlike'
c. *akradir* /ak.ra'dir/ 'writing implement'
d. *esonak* /e.so'nak/ 'citizen'

2.2.2 Phonological Changes

Placeholder

2.2.3 Syllable Parsing

Placeholder

2.2.4 Number of Syllables per Word

Placeholder

2.3 Tavonic Prosody

Placeholder

2.3.1 Syllable Weight

Placeholder

2.3.2 Word Stress

Placeholder

2.3.3 Intonation

Placeholder

2.4 Alnuric Phoneme Inventory

Placeholder

2.4.1 Consonants

Placeholder

2.4.2 Vowels

Placeholder

2.5 Alnuric Phonotactics

Placeholder

2.5.1 Syllable Structures

Placeholder

2.5.2 Phonological Changes

Placeholder

2.5.3 Syllable Parsing

Placeholder

2.5.4 Number of Syllables per Word

Placeholder

2.6 Alnuric Prosody

Placeholder

2.6.1 Syllable Weight

Placeholder

2.6.2 Word Stress

Placeholder

2.6.3 Intonation

Placeholder

2.7 Redodhic Phoneme Inventory

Placeholder

2.7.1 Consonants

Placeholder

2.7.2 Vowels

Placeholder

2.8 Redodhic Phonotactics

Placeholder

2.8.1 Syllable Structures

Placeholder

2.8.2 Phonological Changes

Placeholder

2.8.3 Syllable Parsing

Placeholder

2.8.4 Number of Syllables per Word

Placeholder

2.9 Redodhic Prosody

Placeholder

2.9.1 Syllable Weight

Placeholder

2.9.2 Word Stress

Placeholder

2.9.3 Intonation

Placeholder

Morphological Typology

What's the morphological typology like?

Morphology

How does the morphology work?

Compounding

How does compounding work?

Time and Measurement

How to tell time and measure things.

Derivation

How do you make new words?

Syntax

How do words go together?

Discourse

How does conversation work?

Tavonic Reference Grammar

Here is a reference grammar for Tavonic.

Alnuric Reference Grammar

Here is a reference grammar for Alnuric.

Redodhic Reference Grammar

Here is a reference grammar for Redodhic.

Part II

Kalaakan Language Family

History and Ethnography

Phonology

Morphological Typology

Morphology

Compounding

Time and Measurement

Derivation

Syntax

Discourse

Kalaakan Reference Grammar

Elvish Reference Grammar

Dwarvish Reference Grammar

Orcish Reference Grammar

Part III

Kunmian Language Family

History and Ethnography

Phonology

Morphological Typology

Morphology

Compounding

Time and Measurement

Derivation

Syntax

Discourse

Kunmian Reference Grammar

Gnomish Reference Grammar

Part IV

Appendices

Conceptual Metaphors

What metaphors do the vocabulary convey?

Language is a tool. I speak *with* or *using* Tandis, rather than just speaking Tandis.

B

Kinship

C

Names

D

Examples

Vocabulary

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